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ANSWER

To that Part of

Dr. *BRETT*'s Sermon

Which relates to

*The Incapacity of Persons not
Episcopally Ordain'd to ad-
minister Christian Baptism.*

In a Letter to the Doctor.

L O N D O N :

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S I R,

WHEN first the Author of *Lays*
Baptism Invalid publish'd his Dis-
 course upon that Subject, I
 thought the Inconsistency of
 such Notions with the Goodness, Mercy, and
 other Moral Attributes of God, wou'd have
 preserv'd the mere Thinking Part of our Nation
 from running into those wild extravagant No-
 tions there laid down. They carry such an irre-
 concilable Difference from common Sense and
 Reason, that those only who can believe the
 Necessity of Confession, Penance, and Absolution,
 cou'd possibly be bias'd enough to believe Them.
 I little imagin'd, that our Pulpits wou'd sound
 with such Doctrines as wou'd confound our own
 Auditors, and expose ourselves, (shou'd once
 such Opinions gain a general Credit amongst
 us) to the Contempt of all the Judicious Persons
 of the Reform'd World. We have hitherto be-
 liev'd the Differences between us and the Dis-
 senters to have been about Ceremonies, and not
 about the First Principles of Christianity: But
 now those Men who have justly deserv'd the
 Commendations they have receiv'd from all the
 Divines of our Church, are prov'd by our New
 Discoveries, not to have so much as understood
 the great and substantial Difference between us:
 For no one can believe, that They wou'd have
 A 2 insisted

insisted on the comparatively trifling Circumstances, The Kneeling at the Communion, The Wearing a Surplice, The Cross in Baptism, &c. and have omitted the more Material Question, Whether they were Christians or not? This is like Tything *Mint*, and *Anise*, and *Cummin*, and neglecting *Judgment*, *Mercy*, and *Truth*. This is spending of time in insignificant Skirmishes, whilst their Adversaries lay open to an Attack in an indefensible Place.

As this is not without its Weight, so the Consequences of your Notions are so shocking, as wou'd justly deter any one from espousing them. For if the Baptism of a Lay-man is null and void in itself, and all are to be reckon'd Laymen *that are not Episcopally Ordain'd*, (*Pref. p. 7.*) it follows, that no one can be sure that he is a Christian: No, not one that is Episcopally Ordain'd, since his Ordination doth not make, but supposes him a Christian. And if such a one was *Invalidly*, as you call it, baptiz'd, all the Baptisms he has made must be *null and void in themselves*; since 'tis as impossible for a No-Christian to make Christians, as 'tis for a Heathen validly to Baptize. If therefore a Dissenter has come over to the Church of *England*, and has taken its Orders, all his Ministrations of the Sacrament are null. Nay, to go a greater Length still, the Ordinations of several of our Bishops, and their Baptisms too, must be *void in themselves*; for they have been the Children of Dissenters; and how they can Ordain to the Christian Ministry who Themselves are No-Christians, is, according to your Principles, unintelligible. What one of a hundred, that is above fifty Years old, can be certain that he was Baptized by an Episcopal Man, or not?

not? If born since those unhappy Days, Whether the Priest that administer'd Baptism to him, were himself baptiz'd? For if he were baptiz'd by a Dissenter, as a Thousand and Ten-thousand People were in the Rebellion, your Notion obliges you to hold him as a Heathen; since *all the hopes we can have, must be drawn from God's un-covenanted Mercies*, (Pag. 26.) and consequently the Sacraments that he administers are *but the Profanations of those Holy Mysteries*, *ibid.* What infinite Scruples of Conscience must hence arise? Accordingly, one was lately so affected with hearing this Doctrine asserted from the Pulpit, at St. *Augustin's*, that it occasion'd a couple of Letters to the worthy Rector, because the Person was born in those Days of Confusion, and ignorant by whom baptiz'd.

CONSIDER, Sir, if it be possible to prove, that every Bishop, in this long Succession of 1700 Years, has been qualified to ordain others; I mean, if some of them, from Laymen, have not been oblig'd to accept the Episcopal Office and Dignity, without being ever Priests. Has there not been heard of such a thing in Nature as a She-Bishop, who confer'd Orders, made Abbots, promoted Bishops, and govern'd the Western World? Were her Ordinations valid? Were the Sacraments administer'd by Pope *Joan* sufficient? Or, is not this such a Fundamental Defect as, like an Error in the first Concoction, cannot be mended? Or, if it may be repair'd, What length of Time, what Prescription, or, what else is it that will do it? How can any one be assur'd, that he derives not his Orders from Persons who had them from her Hands only; and, consequently, tho' he has had Imposition of
Hands

Hands from one, that appears and acts as a Bishop, he may be still no more than a mere *Layman*. Is it in the Power of the exactest Critick in History, to trace the several Links of this Chain quite up to the Apostle's Days? As I cannot satisfy myself in these Points upon the Principles of an uninterrupted Succession, it will lie upon you to reconcile them, or to acknowledge the validity of Lay-Baptism, and the not Absolute Necessity of strictly Regular Episcopal Ordination.

BUT I despair of Satisfaction, since you declare, (P. 6, 7. Pref.) *If any shall think fit to attempt to confute you, That they will not expect you should regard whatever they can say of the Consequences of your Doctrine.* Mathematicians think they have done sufficient to explode a Falsity, if they can reduce it *ad Absurdum, ad Impossibile*. The Consequences of your Doctrine seem to me so full of Absurdities, (you'll excuse me that word at present) that either they are wrong deduced, or the Principles are false.

THE two Points on which you have built the latter part of your Sermon, and which if not invalidated, you shall think nothing else worth your notice, are, *That whosoever is not Episcopally Ordain'd, is no more than a meer Layman.* And, 2dly, *That a Layman cannot minister either of the Sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ; therefore Baptism being a Sacrament cannot be ministred by a Layman,* (Pr.p.7.) This, say you, is the Doctrine contain'd in the twenty third Article of our Church. I'll here transcribe the Article, and stand or fall in this Controversy by the words of it. "It is not lawful for any Man" to take upon him the Office of publick Preaching or Ministring the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully call'd and sent

“ sent to execute the same : And those we ought
 “ to judge lawfully call’d and sent, which be
 “ chosen and call’d to this Work by Men who
 “ have publick Authority given unto them, in the
 “ Congregation, to call and send Ministers into
 “ the Lord’s Vineyard. Now,

1. THIS Article is penn’d in such general Words as are equally applicable to the Reform’d Churches of *France* or *Geneva*, as to any Episcopal Church whatever ; for Their Ministry may plead a *Lawful Call* in the literal Sense of our Article, because They are, *call’d and sent to that Work by Men who have publick Authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord’s Vineyard.*

2. THIS Description or Definition of a *Lawful Call* is applicable to all possible Cases that can happen : Even a *mere Layman* pitch’d upon in and by a Congregation to preach and minister the Sacraments is not excluded. To prove this, we are only to consider what we mean by *Publick Authority*. In Absolute Governments the Will of the Prince is the only Publick Authority ; and this, as ’tis in himself, he can enlarge or lessen, retract, contradict, in one word, act as he pleases, and what he does is sufficient, lawful, Publick Authority. In Popular States, the Acts of the whole People, or of the major part. In Limited Monarchies, the Acts of the Prince and People, or their Representatives, make up the Publick Authority. Were it therefore an Act, or Law in either Absolute, Mixt, or Popular, or any other sort of Government, that every Parish shou’d, upon the Decease of its Pastor, choose for themselves a sober, discreet, pious Man for their Minister, a *mere Layman*, I think he wou’d have all
 the

the Requisites mention'd in the Article of a Lawful Call: For such a one *wou'd be call'd by Men who had PUBLICK AUTHORITY given them to send Ministers into the Lord's Vineyard*: I am already appriz'd of the Answer you'll make to this, but remember I dispute not here concerning the Regularity of such Proceedings, or whether this wou'd be consonant to Apostolical Institution, but concerning the Article, which I may safely aver, wou'd justify the Call of a Layman, as the Case is before stated.

3. THAT you may not think this such an impossible Case, as no one else has conceived, I'll transcribe a Case from the Judicious and Learned Mr. *Mason*, who has so incomparably well defended our Church, both against Papists and Dissenters, "Suppose (says he)

V. Defence of the Ordination of the Protestant Ministers beyond Sea, p. 169. in a Book intitled, Certain Brief Tracts, written by divers Learned Men, concerning the ancient and modern Government of the Church. Printed in 1641. a scarce and invaluable Book.

" a Spanish Armada, transporting Men and Women, and among them one Priest, for the further Plantation of the West-Indies; being long toss'd with tempestuous Winds, shou'd at length suffer Shipwreck upon a strange Coast of an unknown Island, yet so that most of the People, by the Providence of God, escape and come safe to Land. Now they are in another World, their Ship is sunk, their Tackling gone, they are void of all means and hope of return. The Priest he instructeth them, baptizeth their Children, and performeth other Priestly Offices, still expecting if any Ship should arrive or approach to that Coast. Thus many Years passing, their Hopes fail,

" their

“ their Hearts faint, their aged Priest is even
 “ hard at Death’s door : Now tell me what shall
 “ he do ? Must he leave his Congregation with-
 “ out a Guide ? Or, Shall he not much rather
 “ make choice of some most eminent amongst
 “ them for Knowledge and Virtue, and by Fast-
 “ ing, Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, set them
 “ apart for the Priest’s Office ? ” Wou’d not
 these Men, thus set apart to the sacred Ministry,
 be agreeably to the Article, *chosen and call’d to
 this Work by Men vested with PUBLICK AUTHORITY ?*

4. I can’t but subscribe to the Judgment of
 that very Learned Prelate the Lord B. of Sarum;
 “ That our Reformers had in view two fa-
 “ mous Instances in Church-History of Lay-
 “ men that had Preached and Converted Nati-
 “ ons to the Faith. „ But as those were Regu-
 lar Practices, I am apt to think they had Irregu-
 larities ~~was~~ in their view, such as Ordinations of
 Bishops from Laymen, Ordinations by Presby-
 ters of old, and Ordinations by Presbyters in
 the Reformed Churches, who were under a Ne-
 cessity of going more astray from Apostolical
 Forms than we ourselves were : which last the
 same Reverend Prelate has observ’d.

’Tis time to pass from your Preface to your
 Sermon itself : where (*Pag. 14. & seq.*) you bring
 Four Arguments to establish the Principles laid
 down in your Preface. The

First is taken from the words of the Text,
*Go ye therefore and Disciple all Nations, Baptizing
 them.* The

Second is this, (*P. 16.*) *We are the Soldiers of
 Christ. Every Soldier must be list’d into the Service
 of his General or Sovereign, by such Person as had re-
 ceiv’d a Commission from the Sovereign so to list him :*

B

And

And no Person can list any, but those who have receiv'd a Commission so to do. The

Third is, (P. 17.) Baptism is a Positive Institution. Therefore (P. 18.) the Persons by whom Baptism is to be administred are as Positive a part of the Institution, as any thing else relating to that Ordinance. The

Fourth is, (P. 18.) Baptism is a Seal of a Contract or Covenant between God and the Person to be Baptiz'd. 'Twould be (P. 19.) highly presumptuous to pretend to contract for a Superior, without a Deputation from him so to do. Ergo, Such a Covenant must be null and void in itself.

The First Argument is taken from the words, Go ye therefore and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them. From which you infer, That Christ has plainly authorized a particular Order of Men to perform this Office.. What you mean by a particular Order of Men, you have told us, (P. 15.) as plain as words can speak, He did not, i. e. Christ, say to them, Do you, and the rest of your Brethren, go and Disciple all Nations, but, GO YE, that is, YE to whom I now speak, YE whom I appointed to meet me here, that I might confer such Authority upon you, Go ye and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them. This is a plain PARTICULAR SEPARATION of them for this Work and Office, EXCLUSIVE OF ALL OTHERS.

Now if this Observation of yours is strictly just, I fain wou'd know by what Authority any Episcopal Man can now Baptize. My Reason is, Because our Saviour gave this Commission only to the Eleven, only to those to whom He then spoke, *exclusive of all others*. The rest of the Disciples of CHRIST were neglected, that is, no Notice was given them, no Orders that they shou'd

shou'd meet him at this Mountain in Galilee, therefore they were not design'd to be *Authorized* at that time : The Commission was only to the Eleven, to the YE whom I appointed to meet me here ; therefore it cou'd not be to those who cou'd not meet him there. As this Consequence is natural and very evident, I must desire of you to answer it, when you are dispos'd to regard the Consequences of your Notions.

2. Your Argument is this, CHRIST selected Eleven to Baptize, taking no notice of the rest : Therefore none but Persons selected can Baptize. Or thus, Therefore none but Persons appointed by those Eleven can Baptize. In this Consequence there seems to be just the same Failure as in the following, The King has appointed Twelve Judges to determine the Controversies of the Nation, therefore none but Persons appointed or call'd by them can determine them. To say that none else can determine them Judicially or Absolutely is to say nothing, for Appeals lie from one Judge to another, as well as from an Arbiter to a Judge : and the Determination of a Private Person to whom a Matter is referr'd, is and ought to be as Obligatory as the Decree of a Judge ; the only difference is, one is back'd with Power to execute his Sentence, the other not.

3. Granting you that the word, YE, includes the Apostles and their Successors, as I suppose you will insist on it, notwithstanding your exclusion of all others besides the Eleven, you will allow that it relates to the same Persons that *Του, ἑμῶν*, doth in the following Verse. This last our best Commentators and most Judicious, have made to be the Ministers of the Gospel,

not confining it to Bishops and Persons Episcopally Ordained. But because I am sensible you will lay no Weight on this, I'll pass

4. To the Commission itself, *Go ye and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them.* What Reason can you assign, that one part of this Grand Commission must necessarily be confin'd to the Apostles, and Bishops, and Episcopally Ordain'd Persons, and not the other? If they alone are to Baptize, must not they alone make Disciples? they alone make Converts? Or how shall we know that our Blessed Lord left one at liberty and not the other? 'Tis granted on all hands, that any Layman may convert a Nation, and every Well-wisher to the Glorious Cause of CHRIST wou'd rise up with Reverence to that Man of God, who, like *Fruementius*, shou'd convert an *Indian* Nation. Shou'd he go a Step further, and Baptize this People, remote from any Nation where Priests or Bishops cou'd be had, wou'd not this Commission bare him out to God and Man? For he that said, *Go ye and Disciple all Nations*, added, *Baptizing them*; the same Persons that were bid to do the one, were bid to do the other. Suppose an *Indian* Convert shou'd ask a mere Layman, that had Discipled him, the Question that the Eunuch ask'd *Philip*, *See here is Water, what doth binder me from being baptized?* And upon that shou'd make the Confession that the Eunuch did, *I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD*: The other shou'd answer, That's an Office belongs to a particular Sett of Men, *exclusive of all others*, I dare not intermeddle: The Convert might reply, The Authority by which you have hitherto acted is founded, you tell me, on those words of my Saviour,

Go ye therefore and Disciple all Nations: Is it not the Will of GOD, and of the Son of GOD, JESUS CHRIST, whom you have preached, that Conversion and Baptism shou'd be join'd in Practice, as he himself has join'd them in the Command? And *what* GOD *has* joined together, has He himself any where, or can *Man* put asunder? I know not what Replication cou'd be made, but from Order and Regularity; which if you, Sir, think a good one, you must quit your Principles; if a bad one, you must shew how and when the Commission was split, so as absolutely to exclude all but Episcopal Clergymen from Baptizing others. — I must here beg leave to tell you, that I am a Clergyman, as strict a one as others, that I regard and esteem the Church of *England* as the purest Church in Christendom, that I look upon all its Ceremonies as decent, that I constantly comply, to the best of my Power, with its Canons, I reverence its Governours, my Lords the Bishops, and am ready, when call'd upon, to defend our Constitution against the Dissenters of any sort. I mention this, that you may not think I talk Schismatically, when I urge the Cases I mention; and that neither you, nor any one else, may immediately mark me out as an Enemy to the Church, because I found its Regimen upon nothing else but Order and Regularity, which may, upon necessary Circumstances, admit some degrees of Variation. I proceed to your

Second Argument, taken from our being Soldiers of CHRIST. *Every Soldier must be list'd into the Service of his General or Sovereign, by such Person as had receiv'd Commission from his Sovereign so to list him. And no Person can list any, but those who have*
receiv'd

receiv'd a Commission so to do. (P.16.) To this I reply, 1. That Arguments drawn from Figurative Expressions serve to inflame the Passions, not to inform the Judgment; they enliven our Thoughts, but seldom do any service to Truth. For Instance, *We are said* to be the Soldiers of CHRIST, and we know a Soldiers Life is a Life of Hardship, his Bed is the cold Ground, his Canopy the Heavens, his Diet spare; therefore every Christian ought to live a Hermit's Life, in Fields, or Caves, and forsake Cities, except in Winter-Seasons. Christians are Soldiers, therefore they must obey implicitly the Will of their Superiors, upon pain of eternal Damnation; because Soldiers, upon pain of Death temporal, cannot resist the Wills and Commands of their Generals. But that you may not tax me with the bare evasion of an Argument, 2dly, I add this Case, which is directly contrary to your Assertion throughout the 16th Page, and half the 17th, When a Company of Gentlemen form'd themselves into a Body, under the Command of Mr. Walker the Clergyman, and so bravely defended themselves and the City of London-Derry, in the late Irish Wars, who was it gave that Ecclesiastick a Power to *list* Men, or them a Power to *list* themselves? Who gave him his Captain's Commission? Or, Will you deny those Gentlemen to have been *Soldiers* during that time? If then *the Person listing, and the Persons listed*, (P.17.) acted so bravely, and merited so much by that Conduct, pray tell me, had they *just cause to fear* the King's *high Displeasure*? Or, Was this a *Contempt of his Authority, and Mockery of his Commission*? What Commission had multitudes of Private Gentlemen to raise Companies, and maintain them

them at their own Charges, during the Rebellion in K. Charles I. Time? Or can you deny them to have been *truly and properly Soldiers*? The Principle which you must resolve these Cases upon, will afford you so much Light as evidently to see, *That Lay-Baptism is only irregular, and not ineffectual*, (Pref. p. 5.) and consequently, as you rightly there infer, *it is better that the Irregularity shou'd be dispensed with, than that a Person shou'd lose the efficacy of the Sacrament*. For 'tis certain, that Necessity will excuse the Regularity of Proceedings, and gives a Commission where, at other times, 'twou'd be criminal so to act. Your

Third Argument is, That Baptism is a Positive Institution, ordain'd by CHRIST himself, (P. 17.) therefore The Power to administer it must be Positive, and can belong to none but only such as CHRIST has or shall authorize by the Institution. Then to prove, that the Persons are as Positive a part of the Institution, as any thing else relating to that Ordinance, (P. 18.) you argue, that CHRIST made choice of but Eleven (tho' he then had above Five-hundred Disciples) to put in practice this Institution.

1. Here seems to me an apparent Fallacy in this Method of Reasoning; for this put into Form stands thus: *Every Positive Institution requires particular separate Persons to administer it. This is a Positive Institution, Ergo, &c.* To prove the Major, which is denied, you say, *The Power to administer a Positive Institution must be Positive, i.e. as I guess at your meaning, Fix'd to particular Persons by the Ordainer.* This Proposition it will lie upon you to prove, since 'tis not only possible, but is Fact, that a Positive Institution of God has not been tied to any separate particular Persons. Circumcision, for Instance,
was

was a Positive Institution, and yet not tied to any particular Sett of Men, but any that were expert in the Operation did it.

2. I can't but observe, that you frequently say in this Sermon, That CHRIST made choice of the Eleven, *particularly separating* them to execute that Commission, *Go ye and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them*, (P. 15, 17, 18.) A candid Searcher after Truth wou'd have given us another Reason of the particular Choice of these Eleven, even the Reason the Apostles themselves give, that they might be Witnesses of his Resurrection, *Acts i. 22. chap. x. v. 39, 41.* If this be the Reason the Apostles themselves give of their Particular Separation, that assign'd by you will scarce preponderate amongst sober Christians.

3. It no more follows, because CHRIST selected the Eleven from the rest, and (P. 17.) gave them Power to put in Practice this Institution, therefore none else can Baptize, than because, in the tenth of St. Matthew, our Blessed Saviour call'd unto him his Twelve Disciples, and gave them a Commission to preach, *The kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, v. 7. therefore no one else can lawfully and with Authority do it.

4. Allowing the Power to be Positive to administer this Sacrament, and that it can belong to none but only such as CHRIST has, or shall authorize by the Institution, it will not follow, that no one else can meddle with things of this Nature: For as our Saviour said to the Pharisees, *Matt. xii. Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him, How he entred into the house of GOD, and did eat the Shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the Priests?* His
Ne-

Necessity made the Violation of that Positive Law justifiable, and shews us, that GOD *will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.*

5. I beg you wou'd assign the Place in Scripture where this Sacrament of Baptism is set down as NECESSARILY connected to the Episcopat : so tied to it, that no one else can possibly Baptize VALIDLY. And think me not impertinent if I require a very clear indisputable Passage, since so much as the first Principles of Christianity depend upon it. Those are not sufficient that lay down Rules about Ordination, or make a Superiority in the Ministers of the Church : For neither our Saviour, nor the Apostles, have, as I remember, any where expressly, or so much as by direct consequence asserted, that no one shall be in a State of Salvation, except he be born, bred, or taught in an Episcopal Church. Our Lord seems to say the contrary, when he tells us, *Matt. xviii. 20. Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* I am ready to grant you, that the Rules in Scripture are sufficient to prove a Ministry distinct from the Laity, even to Demonstration ; that the Clergy are the only Regular Ministers in the Gospel Dispensation ; and further, that the Episcopal Clergy are the only Regular Ministers : I grant you too, that the Administration of the Sacraments is properly the Work of Them alone ; yet it will no more follow, that the Baptism by others is *Invalid*, than because by a *Positive Law* of this Land, the Clergy alone may join People in Matrimony, therefore if it be done by a Coachman it shall be *invalid*. Your

Fourth and last Argument is, That Baptism is a Seal of a Contract between GOD and the Person baptized,

tized, (P. 18.) But that Contract is null and void which is made by one unauthoriz'd. Here I must observe,

1. That you yourself affirm it to be only *The highest Presumption imaginable for a Man to pretend to make a Contract for GOD, or in his Name, who has never receiv'd any Deputation from him for that purpose,* (P. 19.) But hence it no more follows, that such Contracts are void in themselves, than that Persons married together by one not commission'd for that purpose, are still disjoin'd. *'Tis the highest Presumption imaginable for a Man to act in a Capacity which the Laws expressly forbid him, yet quod fieri non debet factum valet.*

2. You say it *wou'd be highly presumptuous in any Man to pretend to contract for his Superior without a Deputation from him to do so.* I am apt to believe there is the same Presumption in a Superior unauthoriz'd to contract for his Inferior, as *vice versa.*

3. The supream Law which GOD and Man propose to themselves in either Church or State, is the safety of it. The Safety of the Church consists in the multitude of true Believers, as the safety and flourishing Condition of a State consists in the multitude of obedient Loyal Subjects. Now when the chief End propos'd by GOD is obtain'd, he does not tie himself so strictly to the Means, as absolutely to condemn him that doth not follow the ordinary Method. My meaning is, The chief End which GOD proposes to himself in the Gospel-Dispensation is the Salvation of Mankind. The regular way of obtaining this, is by being true and sincere Christians; the first step to this is Baptism, and Baptism ought to be administred by the Clergy commission'd for that purpose. In this Scale every higher Step is a

higher

nigher approach to the chief End of GOD, than that which is next below it. *e. g.* To be a true Christian is more agreeable to the Will of GOD than barely to be baptized, and to be baptized is to make a nigher approach than not to be baptiz'd at all. Hence it follows, that every Man ought to be baptiz'd, and that every Christian, as Christian, has a Right to baptize others in Cases of Necessity, because 'tis better, 'tis coming nigher to the prime Will of GOD to be Baptized, than not to be so; and better by Laymen, than not at all; as in such Cases where Ministers regularly sent are not to be had, or the Baptisms of such Ministers are conceiv'd sinful, Here every Christian has *Authority from GOD to covenant in his Name, and to bind the Contract by a particular Seal or Institution, (P. 19.)* and there is no doubt but GOD will stand to the Terms of the Covenant, and perform his Part faithfully.

To shew you now that every Christian, as Christian, has a natural Right to baptize, tho' I grant you he that does it, not Ordain'd as he ought to be, and not in Cases of absolute Necessity, acts presumptuously, and is very audacious, I shall use an Argument or two drawn from the Scriptures: The first is taken from *Mark ix. 38, 39, 40.* or *Luke ix. 49, 50.* *And John answered him saying, Master, We saw one casting out Devils in thy Name, and he followed not us, and we forbid him because he followed not us. But Jesus said, forbid him not, for there is no Man who shall do a Miracle in my Name that can lightly speak evil of me: For he that is not against us is on our part.* The natural plain meaning of which words is, He that pursues the same End that we do, that strives to beat down the Kingdom of Satan as we do, is not to be

forbidden, he is on our Side. And doth not every one that Baptizes a Child or Person adult, bring his helping hand to subvert the Kingdom of Satan? And shall we presume to forbid him, whom our merciful Saviour commanded his Disciples not to forbid? Whether this proceeds from Pride or Passion, or whence, our Saviour himself will one Day judge. My

Second Argument is taken from 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. *Ye also as lively stones are built up a Spiritual House, an Holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. — But ye are a chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood.* St. John tells us, likewise, Rev. i. 6. that CHRIST hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father. The same Appellation he gives us, chap. v. 10. To explain these Passages we must observe, 1. That both St. Peter and St. John speak not of any particular Set of Men, but of the whole Christian World. 2. They call all Christians *an Holy Priesthood, a Royal Priesthood, and Priests*, in contradiction to that particular Tribe of the Jews out of which alone Priests cou'd be: *Olim ex una tantaxat Tribus parte erant Sacerdotes, per Christum omnes*, says Grotius, *in locum*. From this therefore thus I argue, 'Tis the part of Priests to do those things as pertain to the Service of God: All Christians are Priests, therefore it pertains to all Christians to do those things as relate to the Service of God: Now Baptism being a part or one of those things which relate to the Service of God, all Christians may Baptize. 3. That I may not be tax'd with Novelty in this Case, I'll venture to add the Authority of Tertullian; *Nonne & Laici Sacerdotes sumus? Scriptum est enim, Regnum quoque nos & Sacerdotes Deo & Patri suo fecit.*
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Differentiam inter Ordinem & Plebem constituit Ecclesia, & Honor per Ordinis concessum Sanctificatus: adeo ubi Ecclesiastici ordinis non est concessus, & offers, & tinguis, & sacerdos es tibi solus. And presently after, *Igitur si habes jus Sacerdotis in temetipso, ubi necesse est, habeas oportet etiam Disciplinam Sacerdotis, ubi necesse sit habere jus Sacerdotis, Exh. Castit.* The least that these words imply is, certainly, that in *Tertullian's* Judgment the Laity have a Right to the Priesthood, and, where 'tis a case of necessity, may exercise that Right. And hence 'tis evident, that only Order and Regularity makes some act, and restrains others from acting in that Capacity. A

Third Argument may be taken from *Gal. iii. 28.* For in *Christ Jesus* there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither Servant nor Free, neither Male nor Female, for ye are all one in *Christ Jesus.* The Apostle is here arguing, from the distinction put between Male and Female in the Jewish State; The Male alone, *Federis signum in corpore gerebat, solus Regni ac Sacerdotii erat capax,* says *Grotius, i. e.* He alone bore the Sign of the Covenant in his Body, He alone was capable of the Kingdom and Priesthood. Hence I'll observe, 1. That 'tis not absolutely necessary in itself, that Baptism should be perform'd by an Episcopāl Hand, because in *CHRIST* there is no distinction of Persons. 2. That Order and Regularity are to be observ'd, for the sake of Peace, and, consequently, no one ought to presume to act in any of the Priestly Offices, where a Priest can be had. 3. That tho' as Christians we all are equal, and all have the same Privileges, yet the Will of *God* directing or permitting the Apostles to settle a Form of Discipline in the Church, is apparent. Now, as
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the End of all Government is the good of the Governed, and Order is not for itself but for some other End, Necessary Breaches of Order, if for the evident good of the Church, will justify themselves to GOD, *who knows the Heart, and searches the Reins, and will render to every Man according to his Works.* 4. Put the Case that Bishops only can Ordain, or give a Commission, (P. 22.) Now, to Persons to Baptize, it follows not therefore that none but Persons so appointed shall *validly* Baptize, any more than it follows, that because none but the Twelve Judges can call a Man to the Bar, therefore no body but Persons so call'd can draw a Lease, that shall stand good in Law. Suppose a Man shou'd put on a Bar-Gown, tho' never admitted into any Inn of Court, nor had any of the Requisites to a Call to the Bar, except a competent Skill in the Laws of the Land, and shou'd practice for a considerable time unheeded; sometimes he pleads Causes, at others draws up Deeds or signs Writings that are brought before him, as Council usually does, 'tis granted that these Actions wou'd be bold and audacious, yet none of the Advantages his Clients had receiv'd wou'd ever be revers'd; they wou'd continue *valid*, the same as if done by the most regularly call'd.

Thus, Sir, have I examin'd your Pleas for the Invalidity of any Baptisms administred by others than Persons Episcopally Ordain'd. I am not insensible of what loads of Clamour, and perhaps Calumny and Contempt will be laid upon me, as presuming to defend this Opinion. We have been told, that if any Clergyman should fight against the Assertion of the Invalidity of
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Lay-Baptism, he wou'd be suspected to be one of those who took Gifts and Presents of the Dissenters, to let the Names of their Children be registred among the true Baptisms of the Church: Or of another sort, who court the Favour and Applause of the Dissenters. All I shall say to this is, That more Charity and less Learning is to me infinitely preferable to a great deal of Learning and less Charity; For though I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass or a tinkling Cymbal. I hope I have kept the Rules of Justice to you, and of Truth sacred and inviolated; I am sure I have those of Honesty, neither concealing any Argument or Circumstance that has any strength in it, to my Knowledge, nor offering any thing but what I believe to be true. The Subject in Hand is so material, and so wide is the Difference between us, that I conjure you to shew me my Errors, if I am in any, in the Spirit of Christianity; and to believe me as ready to retract them, as I am to defend the Truth, whenever or where-soever it appears to me. That Truth may prevail is the hearty Desire and Prayer, to God Almighty, of,

S I R,

Your Friend and Brother,

Post.

Postscript.

I Must here beg leave to ask you, what in your Opinion, are the Requisites to make a Man a Bishop? And in what Capacity a Bishop doth Ordain? For if there have been Bishops made immediately from Laymen; chosen out of Deacons, Subdeacons, Readers, and such as have been no more in Orders than a Justice of Peace, or a Tradesman; if, contrary to all Orders, Canons, or Determinations of the Church, Men have been thrust into that Dignity; such infinite Scruples about an uninterrupted Succession will arise, as will not easily admit an Answer. And 'twill follow, That the Laity have nothing to do to enquire, who were the Persons that Ordain'd the Minister they have occasion to make use of: But 'tis sufficient for them to expect the Benefits of his Ministration, without his being able to produce his Sacerdotal Genealogy in a right Line from CHRIST.

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